



United States Department of Agriculture

# 2014 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree

Chippewa National Forest



2012 - The tree survives the July wind storm

1992 - Chippewa National Forest provides Capitol Christmas Tree

1964 - U.S. Capitol Christmas tree tradition begins

Forest Supervisor's Office, Camp Rabideau and Marcell Ranger Station

President Calvin Coolidge officially names the Chippewa National Forest

1935 - Civilian Conservation Corp build

1928 -



Forest Service



## A Tradition Begins

The tradition of the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree began with Speaker of the House of Representatives John W. McCormack in 1964. The first tree, a live Douglas-fir purchased for \$700 from Buddies Nursery in Birdsboro, Penn., was planted on the front lawn of the Capitol. That tree survived through the 1967 celebration but succumbed to wind and root damage. In 1968 and 1969, the Capitol Christmas trees were assembled by combining a pair of eastern white pine trees, but that proved cumbersome and ultimately unsatisfactory.



Service employees provide support as part of their duties. This year, the Forest Service partnered with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and Choose Outdoors to make this hugely coordinated effort a success.

So, in early 1970, the Capitol Architect turned to the Forest Service for help. Since then, the annual tradition has become an honor for one national forest. Now, every year the Forest Service plays an integral role in providing the “People’s Tree,” named such because it comes from public land and the tree’s annual trip is supported by many local communities along the way. The cost of moving the tree, providing ornaments and hosting various events is covered by a nonprofit organization, partners and the Forest Service, all dedicated to the event. Forest

## Chippewa National Forest is Selected

The Chippewa National Forest was selected as the provider for the 2014 Capitol Christmas Tree to Washington, D.C. A generation has passed since a tree from Minnesota has visited our nation’s capital as part of the nation’s holiday celebrations. In 1992, the Chippewa National Forest and Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe sent a 60-foot white spruce.

To kick-off of the 2014 tree event, Smokey Bear and students from Cass Lake-Bena Elementary joined employees in the special announcement held at the Chippewa National Forest’s Supervisor’s Office in Cass Lake on Wednesday, December 11. As part of the afternoon, students helped create decorations for a small Christmas tree that greeted visitors when they came to the office. This was a way to showcase the Capitol Christmas Tree ornaments.



## 2014 Capitol Christmas Tree Logo

An official logo was designed for the 2014 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree. The logo was used as a symbol throughout the project representing the heritage of the people and communities from northern Minnesota. Highlights of the logo include important elements such as the bald eagle, traditional Ojibwe floral design, use of the Capitol building and a Christmas tree. Other unique features included the use of the floral pattern for the garland on the tree and the star atop representing Minnesota as “The Star of the North” – Minnesota’s state motto.



December, 2013

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1964



## 10,000 Ornaments

The 2014 U.S. Capitol Christmas tree and 70 companion trees that are lighting up the Capitol for the Christmas season are adorned with some 10,000 ornaments made by children and community groups throughout the state of Minnesota. The number is a representation the Land of 10,000 lakes, for which Minnesota is known.

The Chippewa National Forest worked with communities, organizations and schools across the state in the spring and summer months to create ornaments that reflect Minnesota's natural and cultural resources. In addition, people were invited to make and enter ornaments in a variety of contests held in conjunction with county fairs across the state as well as the immensely popular Minnesota State Fair.



Rochester, Minnesota is one community that embraced the opportunity for community members to be a part of history. Organized by Rochester's Mayo Clinic and using a theme of "Joy. Peace. Health.", K-12 school groups made 1,000 ornaments to adorn the trees. Children also helped to plant a tree on the Mayo campus to represent the cycle of life and as a symbol of the tree that was harvested as the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree.

Special thank you to all of the people of Minnesota, communities, organizations and schools across the state who took the time to create an ornament, and for sending something unique and special from Minnesota to the U.S. Capitol this Christmas season.

10,000 ornaments boxed and ready to go! ▼



June, 2014

## A Very Special Christmas Gift in July

Residents from the May Creek Senior Center in Walker, Minnesota, visited the Norway Beach Recreation Area in July to deliver a very early Christmas gift! Myra Kohls presented a hand-crocheted tree skirt to Forest Service employee Mary Nordeen. Everyone was excited about the presentation of the tree skirt because Myra's handiwork found its way to Washington DC in December, accompanying the 2014 US Capitol Christmas Tree!

The big tree graced the front lawn of the U.S. Capitol building, and the Forest sent 70 smaller trees with the help of the Minnesota Tree Farmers Association to decorate the inside of the Capitol. Some of those indoor trees were placed inside offices of Minnesota legislators...and those special trees were decorated with ornaments and tree skirts, like Myra's!

For Myra, it was exciting to have her artwork shown in Washington DC. "It's one of the biggest achievements in my life" said the talented 93-year old, "I put a lot of hours in to making this and I told my son my work was going to DC. He couldn't believe it!" "People were so quick to come forward and help with the Tree Skirt project for the Capitol Christmas Tree. Each piece was unique, and crafted by people with strong ties to northern Minnesota. Everyone was so proud to be a part of Capitol Tree, and we truly appreciate the time and love put into each item" said Nordeen.

## Tree Found: One in a Million

At the end of July, staff from the U.S. Capitol and the Washington Office of the USDA Forest Service visited the Chippewa National Forest to narrow down the dozens of tree candidates to the final selection.

Another tree was also chosen as a backup just in case something happened to the first, such as a lightning strike.

The search for the Capitol Christmas Tree began early in 2014. Criteria that the Chippewa National Forest staff considered in the search included a tree of 60 to 80 feet in size, a full pyramid-like shape without gaps, healthy branches, a straight trunk, and a species that is hardy enough to withstand transport to Washington D.C. And, the tree had to be found among millions of other trees that make up the Chippewa National Forest.

The tree selected was nominated by Chippewa National Forest employee Justin Tabaka.



July, 2014

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## Standing Tall: 16-year-old makes Christmas tree stands

The U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree was joined by more than 10,000 ornaments from the area, as well as 70 Minnesota companion trees, and...12 tree stands made by Billy Nelson, 16, from Bemidji, Minnesota. Nelson made the stands for his Boy Scouts of America Eagle project.

Nelson's troop leaders were approached by Mike Theune from the Chippewa National Forest, and an Eagle Scout himself, who suggested the stands as an Eagle project.



Nelson explained that the hardest part of the project was preparing and completing all the paperwork. He was able to obtain his building materials through a Home Depot donation. But Nelson wasn't alone for his project. He had help to build the stands from troop leaders, his own parents and both children and parents from his troop.

*"The best part was building them, watching them go from a pile of two-by-fours into stands,"* Nelson said.

Nelson selected a windmill pattern for the stands, which included a square in the middle and legs coming out of each corner. He also included some decorations to show the home location of the stands. Nelson signed his name on the bottom of each stand and put "Troop 25" on one side and "Bemidji, MN" on the other side. Nelson wanted some recognition of where they came from.

Nelson made two larger tree stands that will be placed with trees in the office of the Secretary of Agriculture and also the head of the U.S. Forest Service. The remaining smaller stands were in the offices of the Minnesota senators and representatives.

## Minnesota Logger of the Year Cutting the Tree



This was a big year for Scheff Logging and Trucking. In April the Marcell, Minnesota – based company was named the "Logger of the Year" by the Minnesota Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee (MN SIC). That recognition led to logger Jim Scheff having the honor of cutting the white spruce that lit up the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol.

As Minnesota's 2014 'Logger of the Year' and owner of an outstanding family-run business, Jim Scheff was the perfect choice to cut down this year's U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree. The Logger of the Year Award recognizes outstanding independent logging contractor performance and honors Minnesota's competent, professional and independent logging contractors.

## Tree Cutting Ceremony

October 29, 2014, was an autumn day with a hint of winter and the thought of Christmas was in the air. The Chippewa National Forest, in partnership with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and Choose Outdoors, hosted a public cutting ceremony for the 2014 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree, a 88-foot tall white spruce. Approximately 500 attendees, including 170 local school children, gathered to witness the once in a generation event.



The event began at noon with a welcome from the Chippewa National Forest Supervisor Darla Lenz and a traditional blessing ceremony by Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Spiritual Advisor Larry Aitken. The program also included remarks by U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, U.S. Representative Rick Nolan, staff from U.S. Senator Al Franken's office, and Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Chairwoman Carri Jones.

Minnesota Logger of the Year Jim Scheff had the honor of cutting the tree. Instead of letting the tree fall, two massive cranes carefully lowered it onto a specially

designed flatbed trailer with one-of-a-kind cribbing to support the trunk and not crush the branches. The total truck and trailer length was over 100-feet long!

*"Christmas trees are symbolic of a tradition that focuses on connections to children, family, friends and community. The Chippewa National Forest is proud to be part of this tradition and proud to be able to highlight Minnesota's natural resources by providing the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree,"* said Forest Supervisor Darla Lenz.

*"The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is honored to be a part of the celebrations for the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree 2014 events. We are proud to send the chosen white spruce to represent the heritage of our people and communities from northern Minnesota. Leech Lake has been working hard to fundraise so area students may travel and witness the lighting ceremony first-hand,"* said Chairwoman Carri Jones.

After the Tree was secured on the trailer, the team from Chippewa National Forest and students from Itasca Community College began the arduous process of preparing the tree for the initial leg of its journey to Bemidji State University where it was wrapped for travel to Washington, D.C.



October, 2014

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September, 2014



# The Tour

On November 2, with great fanfare, the tree – an 80-foot plus white spruce– left the Chippewa National Forest followed by a caravan of caretakers for the journey to the U.S. Capitol. From Minnesota’s Chippewa National Forest all the way to Washington D.C., the 2014 Capitol Christmas Tree showcased Minnesota’s natural beauty in communities across the country. The tree was transported by Kenworth Trucks with drivers from Wille Transport at the helm. The tour began at Itasca State Park where the tree received a drink of water from the headwaters of the Mississippi River via a horse-drawn wagon. The U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree and its caravan stopped at over 30 communities along the way reaching over 45,000 people young and old!

## Sunday, November 2

- Itasca State Park, Park Rapids, MN
- Bemidji, MN

## Monday, November 3

- Walker City Park, Walker, MN
- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Tribal Office, Cass Lake, MN

## Tuesday, November 4

- Blackduck Public School, Blackduck, MN
- Marcell Family Center, Marcell, MN
- Deer River High School, Deer River, MN

## Wednesday, November 5

- Wille Transport, Cohasset, MN
- Grand Rapids, MN
- Bayfront Festival Park, Duluth, MN

## Thursday, November 6

- Garlough Elementary School, West Saint Paul, MN
- Lifetouch Photography, Eden Prairie, MN

## Friday, November 7

- Mayo Clinic, Rochester MN
- St. James Hotel, Red Wing, MN

## Saturday, November 8

- Cabela’s, Owatonna, MN
- Northern Star Council Base Camp, Fort Snelling, MN

## Monday, November 10:

- Forest Products Lab, Madison, WI

## Tuesday, November 11

- Community Spirit Park, Milwaukee, WI

## Wednesday, November 12

- Wilmington High School, Wilmington, IL
- Elwood Elementary, Elwood, IL

## Thursday, November 13:

- Gerald Ford Museum, Grand Rapids, MI

## Friday, November 14:

- Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI

## Saturday, November 15:

- Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, MI

## Sunday, November 16

- First Energy Stadium-Cleveland Browns Football Game, Cleveland, OH

## Monday, November 17:

- Kenworth Truck Company, Chillicothe, OH
- Charleston Town Center Mall, Charleston, WV

## Tuesday, November 18:

- Winter Wonderland in Marietta, Marietta, OH
- Oglebay Resort and Conference Center, Wheeling, WV

## Thursday, November 20:

- Joint Andrews Air Force Base, Joint Base Andrews, MD





## The Official Lighting

The 88 foot spruce from the Chippewa National Forest was lit on Tuesday, December 2, officially ushering in the holiday season. Stephen T. Ayers, Architect of the Capitol, served as the Master of Ceremonies, with Speaker of the House of Representatives, John Boehner, assisting in the lighting. U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, U.S. Senator Al Franken and U.S. Representative Rick Nolan were part of the Minnesota delegation on hand to celebrate with U.S. Forest Service representatives, Choose Outdoors and other partners and more than 200 members of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe.

Aaron Urban, a 10-year-old boy fighting brain cancer who wished for a special Christmas, flipped the switch that lights the tree as part of his Make-A-Wish Foundation grant. The tree shone brightly from dusk until 11 p.m. every night through January 1.



## Joining Together for a Special Trip

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and local communities raised money to send 200 plus students, teachers, chaperones, and elders to Washington DC to experience the ceremonial lighting of the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree. The Leech Lake Band's Tribal Council was also in attendance for the tree lighting ceremony as well as several other events during the week including: the Chief of the Forest Service's reception, a drum and dance ceremony at the American Indian Museum, President Obama's Tribal Leader's Summit and a hand drum performance at the Botanical Gardens. The trip was a once in a lifetime opportunity for those that went.

It was a very special trip for several Band members who were making their second visit to take part in the lighting ceremony. District I Representative, Penny DeVault. DeVault attended the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting as a student in 1992. DeVault recalls, "I had the privilege of attending the trip as a student of Deer River High school and 22 years later, I have the honor of attending as a member of the Leech Lake Tribal Council as the District I Representative. It was an excellent learning experience and opportunity for me as a young student. The 2014 trip will help pave the way for our youth to become future leaders of our nation and positive role models."

## Thank You for a Wonderful Journey

The 2014 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree had quite the journey. It traveled roughly 2,700 miles, making 30 stops from Minnesota to DC and visiting 8 states before arriving at the U.S. Capitol early in the morning on Friday, November 22.

From the tree's first drink of water brought by horse and carriage from the Headwaters of the Mississippi River to the Joint Andrews Air Force Base, the tree brought people together across the country. Special memories along the journey included: a 65 foot banner replica of the tree on display at Bentleyville in Duluth, the poignant essays written by K-4 graders delivered at Garlough Elementary, and a bag pipe escort in Rochester. Also, a flash mob of dancers with kazoos in Red Wing, students from 60 schools that helped decorate Cathedral Park Square in Milwaukee, Smokey Bear dancing on stage in the Fan Zone at the Cleveland Browns Sunday football game, hundreds of mittens signed by residents in Michigan to wish the tree well on its journey, the 10,000 ornaments that accompanied the Capitol Christmas Tree and 70 companion trees, and finally the servicemen and women at the Joint Andrews Air Force Base who helped unwrap the tree and prepare it for its final stop. We are thankful for the countless hours of planning and preparation with local Chambers of Commerce, Business Districts, city staff, local law enforcement, and incredible support by community groups such as Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, Salvation Army, Rotary Clubs, and more. It was truly an incredible experience.

What made the journey so special was the incredible sense of community along the way. The outpouring of support and people coming together to create something special and unique to each of their own communities was truly remarkable.







## 2014 Capitol Christmas Tree Sponsors

The Chippewa National Forest partnered with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and Choose Outdoors, Inc. to make the 2014 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree a success. Being able to work with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and Choose Outdoors on the 2014 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree was a wonderful opportunity for the local communities and to further strengthen our ties.

Working with the non-profit organization Choose Outdoors not only helped give the project support by working with local sponsors and companies; but also added experience needed for this national event.

Choose Outdoors is a non-profit organization created to help unite the many diverse interests using our public lands with emphasis on promoting and preserving access, use and the future of outdoor recreation on our public lands.



Delivering the tree would not have been possible without the generous support from private individuals and organizations. The following partners are proud to support the 2014 tour:

### PREMIER

Lifetouch Inc., Eden Prairie, Minnesota

### MAJOR

Kenworth Truck Co., Kirkland, Washington

### WHITE SPRUCE

Hale Trailer Brake & Wheel, West Berlin, New Jersey  
reTHINK Wood

### BALSAM FIR

Advantage Emblem & Screen Printing/Bentleyville, Duluth, Minnesota  
ALK Maps, Princeton, New Jersey  
Cleveland Browns NFL Football  
Explore Minnesota, Saint Paul, Minnesota  
Lakeland Public Television, Bemidji, Minnesota  
Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota  
Minnesota Christmas Tree Association, Clear Lake, Minnesota  
PeopleNet, Minnetonka, Minnesota  
Randall-Reilly, Tuscaloosa, Alabama  
City of Red Wing, Minnesota  
Red Wing Shoes, Red Wing, Minnesota  
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Minnesota Trucking Association, Saint Paul, Minnesota  
Lorenz Bus Service

### RED PINE

Joint Base Andrews, Maryland  
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### JACK PINE

Angie's Kettle Corn, Mankato, Minnesota  
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InHarvest, Bemidji, Minnesota  
Lefty's Tent and Party Rental, Bovey, Minnesota  
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RK Construction, Marcell, Minnesota  
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Scheff Logging & Trucking, Marcell, Minnesota  
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Summit Brewing Company, Saint Paul, Minnesota  
SUPERthrive \* The Original Vitamin Solution, North Hollywood, California  
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Visit Mankato, Mankato, Minnesota  
City of Wabasha, Minnesota  
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### NONPROFIT PARTNERS

Bemidji State University  
Boy Scouts of America  
Girl Scouts  
Minnesota State Historical Society  
National Center for Missing & Exploited Children  
Rotary  
The Salvation Army  
Toys for Tots